

Remarks of Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott
H.J. Res. 114, Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002
As given on the Floor of the House of Representatives
October 9, 2002

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, if our goal is to disarm Iraq, I believe the best way to accomplish that goal would be to utilize the strategy articulated a few weeks ago by Secretary of State Colin Powell, that is, to reinstate, utilizing established rules and supported by multilateral military force if necessary. This policy has the best chance of working, and it has the support of the international community. If military force is needed to enforce the inspections, it will be targeted, focused, and not requiring a massive invasion force. It will be unlikely to provoke widespread warfare all over the Middle East; and it is just as likely to fulfill the goal of disarming Iraq as widespread bombing.

If on the other hand we merely start dropping bombs, how do we even know where to bomb if we have not inspected first? If we do know where the weapons are, those locations can be placed first on the inspection list, and if there is any resistance to the inspection, multilateral military force could be targeted on those sites.

But today we are discussing a resolution authorizing the use of force before the inspectors have even had an opportunity to do their jobs. This resolution represents the last opportunity for Congress to have a meaningful input in the decision to go to war, and unfortunately there are many problems and unanswered questions with granting this authority now.

The first problem is that although the resolution suggests that the President first try to work with the U.N., that provision is unenforceable. This is a problem especially because the President has already stated that he did not need the United Nations, and this resolution allows the President to just notify Congress that, based on the authority granted in this resolution, he has decided to attack Iraq. Furthermore, the broad authority granted in this resolution is inappropriate because of the timing of this vote, less than a month before the election.

Twelve years ago under the first President Bush, the vote to use military force in the Persian Gulf was taken after the election. The timing of this resolution also raises questions because there is nothing shown to be urgent about the situation in Iraq. If the President discovers that the U.S. is in imminent danger, he is already authorized to defend the Nation and no one would expect him to wait for a congressional resolution. If the argument is that the urgency was created a year ago on September 11, the evidence supporting the connection between 9-11 and Iraq is at best tenuous.

In addition to these problems, granting the authority in the resolution is premature because many questions are unanswered. For example, what plans have been made for the

governance of Iraq after we win the war? And what chance is there that a regime change will create any better situation than we have now? And to the extent that Iraq has chemical and biological weapons, is it a good idea to invade Iraq and place our troops right in harm's way? And what will the war cost, and how will we pay for it?

Eighteen months ago we had the largest budget surplus in American history. Today even without the cost of a war, we are approaching the largest deficit in American history with huge deficits already projected for the next 10 years. So what is the plan to pay for the war? Are we going to cut funds for education and health care? Are we going to raise taxes, or will we just run up additional deficits? And what will the domino effect be? If we attack Iraq, Iraq may attack Israel, Israel will attack back, and then everyone in the Middle East will choose sides, and how will that make us better off than we are now?

If we are to make progress against terrorism, we have to recognize that hate is as big an enemy as complex weapons. That hatred may increase because others will resent the fact that we have chosen to apply rules to others that we are unwilling to have applied to us. We would not tolerate applying regime change to the United States, nor would we accept preemptive strikes as an acceptable international policy. The CIA has now reported that the chance that Iraq will use chemical or biological weapons has actually increased since all of the talk about a war began.

Mr. Speaker, all of these problems persist and questions remain unanswered, and they lead to the same basic uncertainty. What is the plan both before and after the war and what are the consequences? Some have argued that a vote against the resolution is a vote to do nothing. That is not true. We should act, but based on the information we now have, I believe the wisest course is to proceed with the strategy proposed by Colin Powell, and that is U.N. weapons inspections in Iraq enforced with multilateral military power. That strategy has the support of the international community. It is most likely to actually disarm Iraq; it does not require a massive unilateral invasion force; and it reduces the risk of provoking widespread armed conflict in the Middle East and terrorism in the United States.

I therefore urge my fellow Members to vote against the resolution.